UK EMERGENCY GUIDE

Heatwaves

Hot weather is pleasant until it is not. Heatwaves in the UK cause serious illness and extra deaths, especially among older people, very young children, pregnant people, and anyone with a heart, lung or other long-term condition. Cooling the person and the home is the priority.

IF YOU ONLY DO THREE THINGS

01 Stay out of the sun between 11am and 3pm if you can, wear light clothes and a hat, and use sunscreen. Drink water regularly and go easy on alcohol and caffeine.

02 Close curtains and windows on the sunny side during the day; open them at night when it is cooler outside. Electric fans can help if the room is below 35°C.

03 Heat exhaustion needs cooling and fluids. If someone is not better within 30 minutes, or shows signs of heatstroke (confusion, hot dry skin, a fit, or collapse), call 999.

HEATSTROKE — CALL NOW

999

Confusion, hot skin that may not be sweating, a seizure, or collapse.

URGENT MEDICAL ADVICE

111

Heat exhaustion that is not settling, or you need advice. 111.nhs.uk

This guide is general public information for UK households. It is not a substitute for the emergency services, official local advice, or professional medical training. In an emergency, always call 999. Official warning and response advice can change — follow current guidance from the emergency services, the NHS and gov.uk/prepare. Three Day Kit (threedaykit.co.uk) is an independent brand and is not affiliated with, or endorsed by, the UK government or any official agency.

BEFORE

BEFORE THE HOT WEATHER SETTLES IN

Watch Met Office National Severe Weather Warnings and UKHSA Heat-Health Alerts. A little work on the house the day before a heatwave is more effective than trying to cool a baked room at midday.

01 **Plan how you will keep the home cool**
Identify the coolest room. Have curtains, blinds or a sheet ready for sun-facing windows. Check that windows can open safely at night. Turn off lamps and equipment that give off heat when a hot spell is due. If you rent and excess heat is affecting health, your council's environmental health team can inspect.

02 **Get water, shade and simple cooling kit together**
Keep bottled water in, and use your Three Day Kit as a reserve if shops run short or you should stay indoors. A spray bottle, a fan, light bedding and oral rehydration sachets or an isotonic drink are useful. Never leave children, pets or anyone who cannot get out in a parked car.

03 **Review medicines and who you should check on**
Some medicines make people more sensitive to heat. If you are unsure, ask a pharmacist before a heatwave, not during one. Make a short list of neighbours, relatives or colleagues who are older, live alone, are pregnant, or have a long-term condition, and agree how you will look in on them.

04 **Change the day's rhythm**
Move walks, exercise, DIY and school runs out of 11am–3pm where you can. If work is outdoors or physical, plan extra breaks, shade and water. If you have to travel, take water, ventilate the vehicle, and plan stops.

05 **Know heat exhaustion versus heatstroke**
Heat exhaustion: tiredness, dizziness, headache, feeling or being sick, pale clammy skin, cramps, thirst, irritability, a high temperature. Heatstroke is an emergency: a very high temperature, hot skin that may be dry and not sweating (this can be harder to see on brown or black skin), fast breathing or pulse, confusion, a seizure, or loss of consciousness.

06 **Look after pets and anyone outdoors**
Walk dogs when it is cooler, give them shade and water, and never leave them in a car. People who work outside, are homeless, or spend a long time on their feet need shade, water and a way to get help.

DURING

WHILE IT IS HOT

01 Keep yourself and the house cool

Stay in the shade, especially between 11am and 3pm. Wear light, loose clothing and a hat, and use sunscreen. Drink extra fluids; avoid alcohol, caffeine and hot drinks as your main fluid. Have a cool shower or put cool water on skin or clothes. Close sunny windows and curtains by day; ventilate when the air outside is cooler.

02 Check on people at higher risk

Look in on older people, babies and young children, pregnant people, anyone who lives alone, and people with heart, lung, kidney or other long-term conditions. Feel the temperature of the rooms they sleep in. Offer water and help them move to a cooler room if you can.

03 Treat heat exhaustion quickly

Move the person to a cool place, loosen or remove extra clothing, give water or an isotonic or rehydration drink, and cool the skin with water, fanning, or cold packs wrapped in cloth under the arms or on the neck. Stay with them. They should feel better within 30 minutes. If they are not, or you are unsure, call 111.

04 Call 999 for heatstroke

Call an ambulance if they are still unwell after 30 minutes of cooling, or if they have a very high temperature, hot skin that is not sweating, confusion, a seizure or loss of consciousness. Do not drive yourself to A&E. While you wait, wrap them in a cool wet sheet or sponge with cold water. If they become unresponsive, follow first-aid guidance: recovery position if they are breathing, CPR if they are not, and tell the ambulance service.

AFTER

WHEN TEMPERATURES FALL

01 Recover slowly and restock

Tiredness can linger. Keep drinking water and avoid intense exercise for a day or two if you were unwell. Replace bottled water and any rehydration supplies in your kit. If a power cut happened during the heat (for example from overloaded networks), follow the power-cut guide for food in fridges and freezers.

02 Review what you would do next time

Note which room stayed coolest, who needed a check-in, and whether medicines or working arrangements need a conversation with a pharmacist or employer before the next alert.

WHAT TO HAVE IN YOUR KIT

In a heatwave your Three Day Kit is mainly water, more water, and a way to stay informed: at least 3 litres of bottled drinking water per person per day for three days, no-cook food that is palatable cold, a torch and power bank (in case of a cut), a battery radio, and any regular medicines. Add oral rehydration sachets if you can, and keep the kit out of a hot loft or a sun-facing windowsill.

PRINTABLE CHECKLIST

TICK WHAT YOU HAVE DONE

- [ ] Met Office and UKHSA heat alerts set up (app or email)
- [ ] Bottled water in the house (3 litres per person per day, for 3 days)
- [ ] Fan available, with the NHS note that fans help most below 35°C
- [ ] List of people to check on, and a way to reach them
- [ ] Household knows never to leave children or pets in a parked car
- [ ] Heatstroke signs understood; 999 agreed as the response
- [ ] If renting, council environmental health number kept for excess-heat problems
- [ ] Coolest room identified; curtains or blinds ready for sunny windows
- [ ] Light clothing, hats, sunscreen and a way to cool skin (spray, flannel, shower)
- [ ] Regular medicines reviewed with a pharmacist if heat is a concern
- [ ] Plan to avoid strenuous activity between 11am and 3pm
- [ ] Heat exhaustion steps understood; 30-minute rule agreed
- [ ] Pet walking and watering plan for hot days
- [ ] Kit stored somewhere cool, not in a hot loft or car boot

UK CONTACTS

WRITE THESE DOWN

HEATSTROKE / EMERGENCY
999
Confusion, seizure, collapse, or no improvement after 30 minutes of cooling.

NHS URGENT ADVICE
111
Heat exhaustion you cannot settle, or you need medical advice. 111.nhs.uk

MET OFFICE WARNINGS
metoffice.gov.uk
National Severe Weather Warnings and the official app.

UKHSA / GOV.UK HEAT ADVICE
gov.uk
Heat-Health Alerts and the national heat health pages.

FIND YOUR LOCAL COUNCIL
gov.uk/find-local-council
Environmental health can inspect rented homes for excess heat.

POWER CUT (IF COOLING FAILS)
105
Free in England, Scotland and Wales. NI: 03457 643 643.

WATER COMPANY
On your bill
If the tap supply fails in a heatwave, use stored water and call your supplier.

OFFICIAL PREPAREDNESS ADVICE
gov.uk/prepare
Hot-weather pages on the Prepare / Be Ready campaign site.

SOURCES

Guidance in this booklet was checked against publicly available official advice in November 2026. Always follow the latest instructions from the emergency services and the links below.

1. NHS, heatwave: how to cope in hot weather — nhs.uk/live-well/seasonal-health/heatwave-how-to-cope-in-hot-weather
2. NHS, heat exhaustion and heatstroke — nhs.uk/conditions/heat-exhaustion-heatstroke
3. UK Health Security Agency, keeping cool and staying well in hot weather — ukhsa.blog.gov.uk and gov.uk heat pages
4. Met Office, staying safe in extreme heat — metoffice.gov.uk
5. UK government Prepare / Be Ready — gov.uk/prepare

General guidance only — not a substitute for the emergency services or professional medical training. Call 999 in an emergency. Independent brand, not a government publication.